

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee
August 22, 2018 Meeting Minutes
Parker Annex Archaeology Center
2025 Barnwell Street, Columbia, SC 29201

Members Present:

Chairman Michael Hutchins, Titus Duren, Bobby Garmany, Martha Herbert, Sam Hiott, Jonathan Rabon and Stephen Thomas.

Members Absent:

Vice Chairman Cleveland Smith and Stan Halliday.

Staff Present:

Emily Cope, Ken Prosser, Billy Dukes, Will Dillman, Sam Chappelle, Tom Swaynham, Shelley Ivester, Charles Ruth, Jay Cantrell, Jay Butfiloski, Ross Self, Lynn Quattro, Lorianne Riggins, Dan Rankin and Sam Stokes.

Others Present:

There were no constituents or other parties present.

Chairman Hutchins opened the meeting.

The minutes of the May 15, 2018 minutes were approved as submitted.

Webb Center Turkey Research Update

Charles Ruth, SCDNR Deer and Wild Turkey Project Biologist, provided a slide show presentation on the Webb Center Turkey Research.

The Webb Center Turkey Project is a collaborative research project between SCDNR and LSU. Dr. Bret Collier is the principal investigator, with graduate students, technicians and Webb Center staff assisting with the research. The research Objectives/Overview are as follows:

- Evaluate male movement ecology;
- Evaluate hen breeding ecology and habitat selection; and
- Monitor and evaluate gobbling chronology of male wild turkey.

This study was implemented to help determine where South Carolina needs to be for Turkey Season dates and will be presented to SC Legislators in November 2018. The current legislative Turkey Season dates were set for 3 years and are due to Sunset in 2019. A hard copy of the Power Point presentation is attached to the original copy of the minutes, marked Exhibit A.

Coyote Tagging Program and Harvest Results

Jay Butfiloski, SCDNR Furbearer Project Biologist, presented a slide show presentation on the Coyote Incentive Program as created in 2016 with Budget Proviso 47.10. As of 2018, this program remains a DNR budget proviso. Since 2016, 32 Coyotes have been tagged and released, 4 coyotes per game zone. Nine coyotes were recovered from the 2016 tagging and 4 coyotes from the 2017 tagging. Mr. Butfiloski

spoke about the implementation and tag recoveries of the program. Coyote harvest numbers were reported by three methods: trapping, with the 2017/2018 season having the largest number of registered trappers since 1989, and trapping/shooting by predator management permittees, with the 2017 season having the highest harvest numbers since 2012. Registered properties for night hunting added several hundred more to the total number of harvested coyotes by licensed trappers and predator management permittees. Deer hunters harvested close to 22,000 coyotes during the 2017 season. Future DNA research may lead to better population/density estimation on a larger regional scale. A hard copy of the Power Point presentation is attached to the original copy of the minutes, marked Exhibit B.

Trout Habitat Enhancement

Dan Rankin, SCDNR Region 1 Fisheries Coordinator and recognized trout expert across the southeast, gave a presentation on brook trout (char) restoration. Habitat depredation started with the logging industry many years ago, transporting logs via waterways and railroads. The brook trout requires pristine conditions for spawning in the fall. The eggs may sit for several months before hatching, and if the water conditions are compromised, then the eggs will not hatch and food sources become scarce for the adult trout. Introducing other species of trout have displaced the brook trout as a native species in many of our streams. In doing research and inventory on brook trout streams and habitat, it was discovered that we have a lot of coarse sand that was affecting habitat areas. Creeks that have a lot of large woody debris, and timber growth around canopies tend to have better habitat and hold more fish. We have used this knowledge in our habitat restoration, beginning in Kings Creek in 2005 and Cane Creek the following year. Large trees were felled to create the preferred habitat and brook trout added. We have continued this process through the years; in 2010, restoring habitat in Laurel Fork Stream and Emory Stream in Jocassee Gorges, and with recent efforts in the Eastatoe Creek Heritage Preserve, working with three tributary streams: Side of the Mountain Creek and Little and Big Laurel Creeks. These streams started out fish-less, so we enhanced the habitat and translocated brook trout to these streams to see if we could establish naturalized, self-sustaining populations from natural spawning. We have been successful in Side of the Mountain Creek, Big Laurel Creek and Howard Creek as of 2017. We were down to approximately 34 miles of self-sustaining brook trout in the entire mountain area in 2005, and we have almost doubled this, as we now have an additional 25 miles of self-sustaining brook trout habitat. We are working with the Greenville water system to identify the populations they have, and have documented two we didn't know we had on the Table Rock watershed, Laurel Creek, and South Saluda drainage. We have just finished a genetics assessment to determine northern brook trout and pure brook trout genetics and populations. DNR just completed a Federal Aid project building 5 habitat structures on the South Saluda River.

Crab Bank and Coastal Bird Conservation Program

Lorianne Riggan, SCDNR Director of Environmental Programs, provided a power point presentation on the Crab Bank Conservation Project. She reported an opportunity exists with the Charleston Harbor Deepening project for providing sediment for the re-nourishment of Crab Bank. Crab Bank Island sits at the mouth of Shem Creek, man-made in the 1950's and 60's and currently a Heritage Trust Property and a dedicated Seabird Sanctuary. Crab Bank is one of only five Seabird Sanctuaries. In 2017 the tropical remnants of Hurricane Irma came through and washed away what was left of Crab Bank Island. Across North America there has been a 70% decline since 1973 in shorebirds, so any available habitat we have the opportunity to promote and re-nourish is important. Of 65 seabirds, shorebirds and wading birds in the State of South Carolina, 47 are listed in our SWAP plan of high or highest conservation concern; 3 are federally listed and 5 are state listed. Crab Bank's location is unique in that it is in the mouth of Charleston Harbor and Shem Creek, and is a highly visible island. Crab Bank started out at 20-25 acres,

but over time has changed. The re-nourishment opportunity is associated with a Post 45 project in which Charleston Harbor will be deepened to 52 feet. When the federal government comes in, they look at improving a federal navigation channel and examine the most beneficial uses for the dredged material to ensure it will be the least cost alternative. Crab Bank was not the least cost alternative. Where Crab Bank sits in the harbor, it is on a natural shelf, so when the material is dredged, it would have to be piped to the island, which increases the cost. When DNR was informed of this, further discussions were held to try to determine a way to put the sediment onto Crab Bank and restore it to a size that is useable for birds. The Corps of Engineers brought to our attention the Cap 204 program which is part of the Water Resources Development Act. It is the Continuing Authorities Program, which allows the Corps to explore the opportunity of a cost-share between a non-federal entity and a federal entity. This presented a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for DNR with this available sediment. DNR is responsible for 35% of the \$4 million dollars needed to move the sediment, which would be approximately \$1.4 million dollars. DNR realizes that we can't do this project alone. There are several supporting organizations that already have an interest in saving Crab Bank, including the South Carolina Wildlife Federation, the Coastal Conservation League, and Audubon South Carolina. These groups met to figure out how they could help raise funds for the project and they came up with the Coastal Bird Conservation Program. In 2016 DNR discovered an option existed to use the dredge material for something good and decided to explore Crab Bank. This is what triggered the Cap 204 study that was finalized in August of 2017 and was followed by a pragmatic partnership agreement, which occurred on July 17, 2018. Events started happening rapidly at this point and DNR provided \$52,500.00 from the Heritage Trust Fund to help meet the cost-share of the initial monies. The total amount will be due to the Corps in December 2018. The design includes 660,000 cubic yards of sediment with the mixture being at least 65% sand. A \$4 million investment between the Corps and DNR would result in thousands of nesting birds and reproducing birds provided into sustainability over the next 50 years. Any funds raised for the Coastal Bird Conservation Program will be used to support the Crab Bank re-nourishment and coastal bird conservation as a whole. While we may not make it to the re-nourishment of Crab Bank, we have created an opportunity with the Coastal Bird Conservation Program.

Advisory Committee Member Comments:

Sam Hiott complimented the presentations given. They were done professionally and were very interesting and informative. Sam suggested a presentation on the mottled duck and would like to see the agency change its procedures on Lifetime license holders having to contact DNR to get their tags. Chairman Hutchins agreed. Bob Garmany agreed with Sam Hiott about the presentations and shared that he is getting positive feedback regarding Samworth WMA. Jonathan Rabon agreed that the dove field and the new dock at Samworth look good. He also praised today's presentations. Titus Duren expressed his thanks to Sarah Chabaane, DNR's Aquatic Education Coordinator, for her involvement in a children's community group fishing education class he hosted. Stephen Thomas would like to see a boat landing (The Pole Yard, located at the Santee River off of Highway 17) named after Rhett Bickley, a DNR officer who recently passed away. Chairman Hutchins agreed and said that he would bring it up at the next DNR board meeting. Martha Herbert commented that the presentations today were some of the most interesting the Committee has ever had and enjoyed them. She is pleased to hear about the improvements made at Samworth. Stephen Thomas asked about the moving of Crow season dates 10-12 years ago. The dates used to be September 1 to November 1. The dates were pushed back to the current dates of November 1 to March 1. His concern is that there are a lot of migrating crows in September and October that pose a threat as predators. Chief of Wildlife Billy Dukes replied that the dates were moved to make it more compatible with the traditional small game season and allow it to run the 124 days allowed. Chairman Hutchins mentioned that he is asked frequently about finding hog

information on-line in the DNR Rules and Regulations booklet. Big Game Biologist Charles Ruth replied that an adjustment had been made to the web site for easier access to this information.

Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be held November 13, 2018 at the Samworth Wildlife Management Area, Georgetown, South Carolina.